



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

# Disabled Persons Protection Commission

**FISCAL YEAR 2015**

## DPPC ANNUAL REPORT

### DPPC Mission Statement

*“To protect adults with disabilities from the abusive acts or omissions of their caregivers through investigation, oversight, public awareness and prevention”*

**Report Suspected Abuse of Persons  
with Disabilities to the  
DPPC 24-Hour Hotline**

**1-800-426-9009 VOICE  
1-888-822-0350 TTY**

### Inside the Report:

Executive Director's Letter	3
Administration & Finance	4
DPPC Hotline	5
Mandated Reporting	8
Investigation Unit	9
Oversight Unit	10
Outreach & Prevention	11
IT Unit	12
Document Retention Unit	13
Legal Unit	14
State Police Detective Unit	15
Pride & Performance Award	18
New Hires	18
DPPC Commissioners	20

Charles D. Baker	Governor
Karyn E. Polito	Lt. Governor
Gail Varrasso	Chairperson
Yndia Lorick-Wilmot, PhD	Commissioner
Maurice Medoff	Commissioner
Nancy A. Alterio	Executive Director

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Web: <http://www.mass.gov/dppc>  
Hotline: 800-426-9009 Voice  
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## A Message from Nancy A. Alterio, DPPC Executive Director

Dear Reader:

Unfortunately, abuse of adults with disabilities in the Commonwealth is a very serious problem. Persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse and victimization due to their physical and intellectual challenges and dependence on others for basic needs. Created by the Legislator in 1987 under M.G.L. c. 19C, the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) is charged with protecting adults with disabilities from the abusive acts or omissions of their caregivers through investigation, oversight, public awareness and prevention. DPPC is in the business of saving lives of persons with disabilities who are victims of abuse throughout the Commonwealth.



The dedicated staff of DPPC, in partnership with the investigative staff of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), confronted the unparalleled challenges throughout fiscal year 2015 and

- Responded to over **16,000** hotline calls;
- Received **9,449** abuse reports, an almost **5%** increase from Fiscal Year 2014;
- Responded to over **5,000** informational and referral calls;
- Recorded **840** death reports;
- Assigned almost **2,772** investigations;
- Completed almost **1,900** investigations;
- Completed **125** petitions for review;
- Responded to **428** record requests and/or record demands;
- Oversaw protective services to over **3,000** individuals with disabilities;
- Hosted and conducted a 40-Hour Basic Investigation training for Adult Protective Services (APS) investigators;
- Conducted a statewide in-service training for APS on trauma informed investigations;
- Trained **1,018** direct care staff, **858** persons with disabilities, **840** law enforcement officers and **169** medical personnel; and
- Maintained operations 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

My deep appreciation is given to all the dedicated and hardworking staff that took part in recognizing, reporting and responding effectively, efficiently and compassionately to ensure persons with disabilities were given the opportunity to live a life free from abuse and neglect. On behalf of the agency, I invite you to review DPPC's Annual Report to learn more about the dedicated work of those involved in responding to abuses committed against adults with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy A. Alterio". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Nancy A. Alterio  
Executive Director

## Administration and Finance

The DPPC's Administration and Finance (A&F) Unit is primarily responsible for increasing the efficiency of office operations, thereby enhancing its delivery of services while ensuring a high level of transparency and accountability throughout the agency's financial operations.

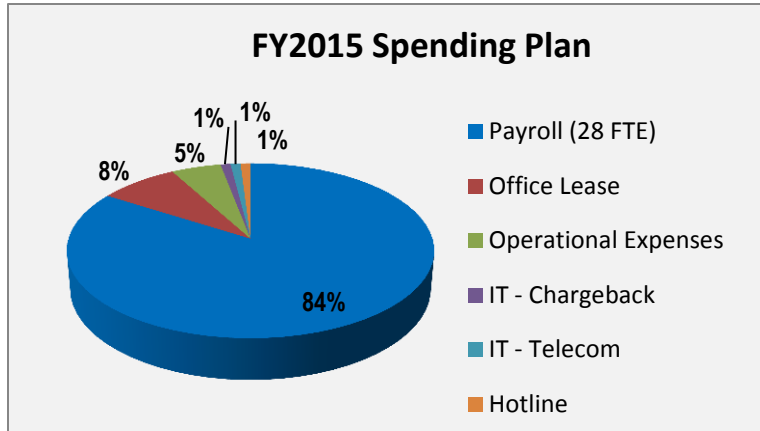
DPPC develops and submits annual budgets and spending plans to the Governor's Office and Legislature to allow DPPC to provide an adequate level of services to receive reports, investigate abuse of persons with disabilities and to ensure the provision of protective services. To guarantee fiscal accountability, monthly and annual fiscal reports are generated, reconciled and provided internally for the Executive Director and the Commissioners.



A&F Unit from left: Nancy Alterio (Executive Director), Audrey Drinan, John Brown (Manager) and Jennifer Edwards-Hawkins

A system of checks and balances is in place for internal control and fraud prevention purposes. DPPC's Internal Control Plan (ICP) identifies agency risks and addresses ways in which to mitigate those risks. The plan is reviewed at least annually and more often as operations change or other risks are identified during the course of conducting business. Upon initial completion and approval, DPPC's ICP was used by the Office of the State Comptroller as a template for other agencies seeking guidance.

Staff payroll and personnel matters are also managed within the A&F Unit. Mandatory staff enhancement in-services and training programs are provided for staff's professional and personal development. Annual in-services include diversity training, disability awareness, time and stress management, team-building exercises and other informative Human Resources Division (HRD) sponsored topics which may include insurance, retirement or general benefits information.



DPPC has proven time and time again that it is an effective and efficient organization. Every dollar received is greatly appreciated, every dollar helps in the protection of persons with disabilities who are victims of abuse and neglect, and every dollar helps to **save lives**. As reflected in the pie chart above, 92% of DPPC's appropriation is dedicated to staffing and lease space. Another 5% is designated to operational expenses such as technology supports, staff travel, copier lease and maintenance agreements, postage and office supplies with 3% remaining to cover the costs of DPPC's 24-hour hotline, telephone system and ITD chargeback.

## DPPC Hotline

The Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) operates a 24-hour Hotline to which citizens of the Commonwealth can report incidents of suspected abuse involving adults with disabilities by dialing 1-800-426-9009 (voice) or 1-888-822-0350 (TTY). Mandated reporters must also file a written report within 48 hours of the oral report. Deaths are also reported to DPPC's Hotline.



The DPPC Hotline and the Intake/Oversight Unit staff who operate it are a vital part of DPPC's efforts to protect adults with disabilities, who are dependent upon others, from abuse and neglect.

*Intake Unit from left: Heidi Cresta (Manager), Greg Bolger, Berkys Kazimierczak and Ann Murray (Manager). (Julie Walden not pictured)*

Four DPPC Intake Operators staff the Hotline between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on business days. An after-hours vendor contracted, trained and monitored by DPPC staff, answers the Hotline after 5:00 p.m. and before 9:00 a.m. on business days. The vendor also answers the Hotline on weekends and holidays. During the time that the after-hours vendor answers the Hotline, there are DPPC staff members readily available to manage emergency or complicated situations. Bilingual (Spanish – English) Intake Operators are available to take abuse reports, and all staff members are trained to communicate via TTY and to utilize Verizon's Telecommunication Relay Service.

Staff members working on the DPPC Hotline are responsible for receiving, documenting and evaluating information provided by reporters. DPPC management reviews each report of abuse to determine the response needed to ensure the safety of the individuals involved. Reports are also evaluated to determine whether the situation meets the statutory criteria that establish jurisdiction under M.G.L. c. 19C.

For DPPC to investigate abuse committed against persons with disabilities, the statute

requires that the victim of the alleged abuse must be:

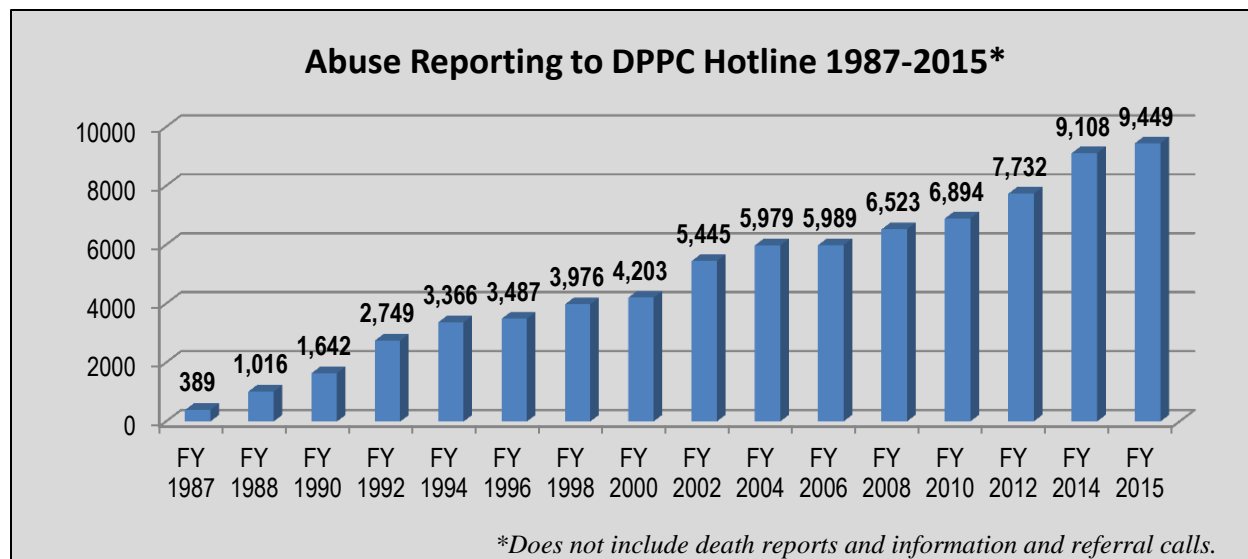
- Between the ages of 18 and 59 years;
- Disabled by means of mental illness, developmental/intellectual disability or physical impairment; and
- Require the assistance of a caregiver to accomplish daily living needs as a result of the disability.

To establish jurisdiction, the Hotline staff must also examine the nature of the incident. DPPC's enabling statute, M.G.L. c. 19C, and the DPPC regulations, 118 CMR, require that the incident must:

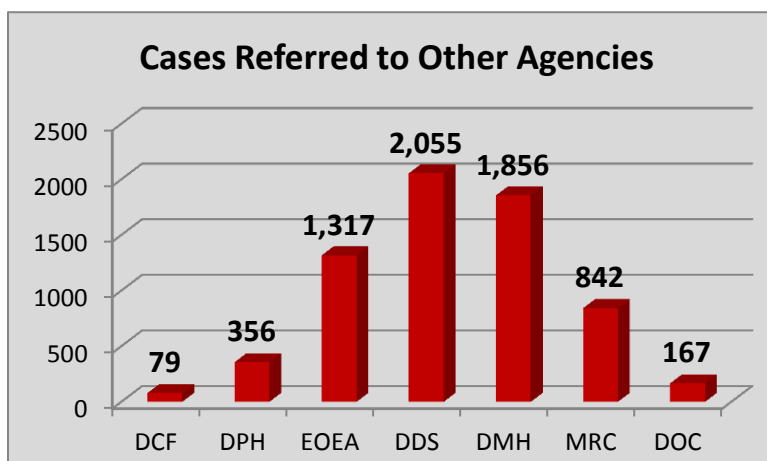
- Include an act or omission by a caregiver and
- Result in a serious physical or emotional injury.

Information gathered by Hotline staff is entered into the DPPC database. The information is available for review each time a subsequent report is made involving a particular individual, alleged abuser or program. All relevant information is documented on a DPPC Intake form and is forwarded to an investigator in situations that meet DPPC's jurisdictional criteria.

During fiscal year 2015, the DPPC Hotline experienced an increase of 5% in abuse reports. The graph below depicts the historical increase in reporting dating back to DPPC's inception in 1987.



If a reported situation does not meet the criteria to establish jurisdiction under M.G.L. c. 19C, a copy of the DPPC Intake form is forwarded for review and action to the service agency appropriate to the individual's age or disability. The graph on the right indicates that in FY2015 there were 6,383 reports that did not fall under DPPC jurisdiction, and illustrates to which state agencies they were referred.



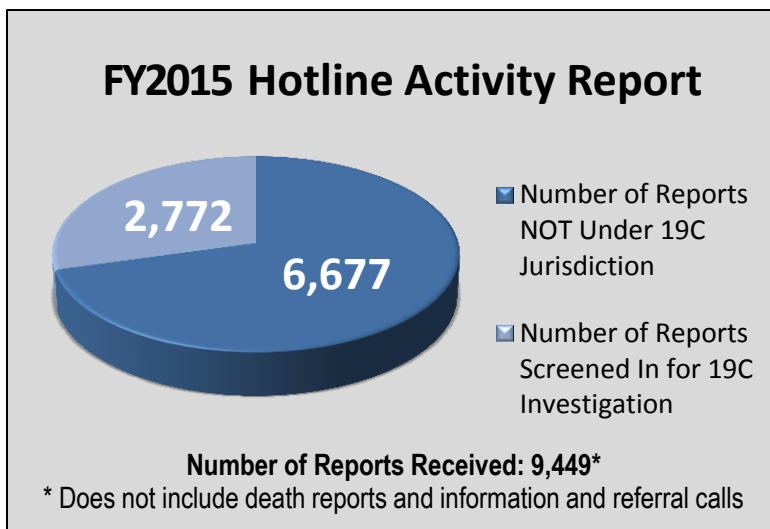
A member of the State Police Detective Unit (SPDU) assigned to the DPPC reviews every report made to the DPPC Hotline. The review by the SPDU is to determine whether the information suggests a crime may have occurred and whether a criminal investigation is necessary. Suspected criminal activity is reported by the SPDU to the appropriate District Attorney's office for their review and action as needed.

The DPPC statute requires that any caregiver that is a state agency or subdivision of the Commonwealth or any private agency contracting with the Commonwealth shall immediately orally notify the DPPC and local law enforcement of the death of any person under their care. A written report of such deaths must also be forwarded to DPPC within 24 hours of the death. This information is assessed to determine whether the cause of death may be related to abuse, and if so, an investigation is conducted. Each report of a death is entered into a database specifically for this purpose.

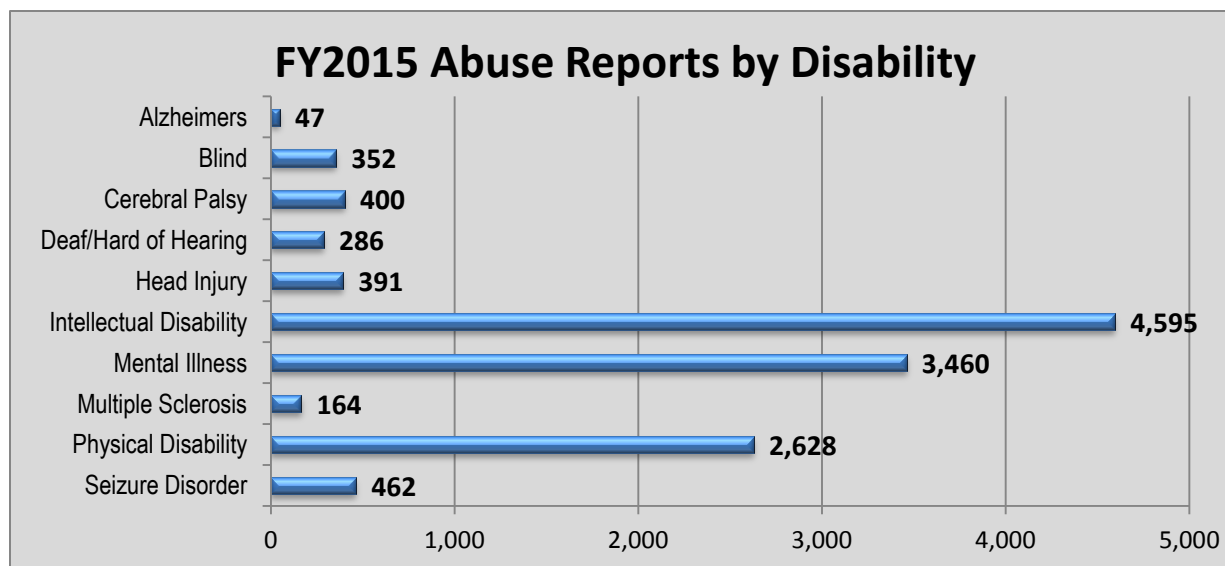
The goal of the DPPC Hotline is to provide every citizen of the Commonwealth a resource to which they can report suspected abuse of persons with disabilities. DPPC trains its staff to be efficient, effective and courteous so that reporters can feel positive about their decision to report what they suspect to be abuse or neglect.

The graph on the right illustrates that during FY2015 the DPPC Hotline received 9,449 reports, not including death reports and information and referral calls, with 2,772 of these reports screened in for investigation.

Each month the DPPC Hotline received an average of 857 abuse and death reports and answered questions and provided information and referral services to an additional 427 callers.



The graph below categorizes abuse reports according to the person's type of disability and illustrates that some individuals have more than one type of disability.



### Hotline Unit FY2015 Update

During FY2015 the DPPC Hotline Unit:

- Received information and entered intakes on 9,449 reports of abuse;
- Received 5,123 Information and Referral calls; and
- Received information and entered death intakes on 841 reports of death.

## **Mandated Reporting**

The DPPC receives reports of abuse from various sources. Many reporters of abuse are mandated by law to make reports of suspected abuse to the DPPC.

### **What is a Mandated Reporter?**

Mandated reporters are persons who, as a result of their profession, are more likely to be aware of abuse or neglect of persons with disabilities. Mandated reporters are required by law to report cases of suspected abuse to DPPC when they have a suspicion that a person with a disability is being abused or neglected. Other persons who are not mandated to report may choose to file reports of suspected abuse.

### **Who are Mandated Reporters?**

- Police Officers
- Probation Officers
- Medical Personnel
- Medical Examiners
- Dentists
- Psychologists
- Social Workers
- Family Counselors
- Foster Parents
- Educational Administrators
- Public and Private School Teachers
- Guidance Counselors
- Day Care Workers
- Employees of private agencies providing services to people with disabilities
- Employees of state agencies in the Executive Office of Health and Human Services

## **What is Reportable?**

The standard for reporting suspected abuse and neglect is “reasonable cause to believe” which means, based on what they know, mandated reporters need only to suspect that abuse or neglect was committed against a person with a disability.

### **Death Reports**

Mandated reporters are also required to report to the DPPC all cases in which an individual with a disability has died, regardless of whether or not abuse or neglect is suspected.

### **Protection for Mandated Reporters**

Mandated reporters are immune from civil or criminal liability as a result of filing a report of alleged abuse of a person with a disability. Non-mandated reporters are also protected provided the report was made in good faith. If a mandated reporter is retaliated against by their employer for filing an alleged report of abuse, or by participating in the DPPC investigation, DPPC will conduct an investigation into the retaliation. Such retaliation is a crime and is punishable by up to a \$1,000.00 fine, or up to one (1) year in jail, or both.

### **Consequences for Not Reporting**

The failure to report can result in severe consequences for the alleged victim, other potential victims and the mandated reporter. Victims of abuse and neglect are at increased risk of further abuse if abuse goes unreported. The frequency and severity of abuse and neglect are likely to increase over time if no intervention occurs. A failure to intervene by not reporting will likely result in other individuals being abused and neglected. In Massachusetts, mandated reporters can be fined up to \$1,000 for failure to report incidents of suspected abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities.



## DPPC Investigations

Reports of alleged abuse determined to be within the jurisdiction of DPPC are immediately assigned to an Adult Protective Service (APS) investigator and a DPPC oversight officer. The APS investigator may be one of DPPC's five investigators or an investigator from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Mental Health (DMH) or the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC).

The DPPC Investigation Unit and the Investigation Units of DDS, DMH and MRC conduct abuse investigations under the authority of M.G.L. c. 19C. The DPPC regulations, 118 CMR, further clarify and operationalize the criteria established by the statute.

The most important goal of any DPPC investigation is to provide protection to anyone who has been, or is, at risk of abuse or neglect by his or her caregiver. To accomplish this protection, the DPPC relies on the services of other state agencies like DDS, DMH and MRC. Working collaboratively with staff from these agencies, DPPC is able to develop effective protection plans for people with a range of disabilities. During the course of the investigation, APS investigators also look for systemic issues that may contribute or lead to abuse.

APS investigators conduct civil, not criminal, investigations. They work in collaboration with DPPC oversight officers, service providers, law enforcement and others to ensure that victims of abuse are protected. Investigators collect information by interviewing witnesses, reviewing relevant documents and collecting all of the information necessary to develop an



*DPPC APS Investigators from left: David Viens (Investigations Manager), Alina Gomes, Karen Manson, Genine Vasquez and John Hubbard.*

appropriate course of action to protect victims of abuse.

Based upon the collected information, the investigator completes an investigation report. In the report, the investigator documents his or her activities and presents conclusions based on the facts. When the facts indicate that an abusive situation exists, the investigator must include specific recommendations in the investigation report to resolve any circumstances that create risk for adults with disabilities who are the subject of the investigation.

### Investigations Unit FY2015 Update

- APS investigators investigated allegations of physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect of alleged victims with varying disabilities in private and public settings;
- APS investigators of DPPC, DDS, DMH and MRC were assigned 2,772 investigations of which 300 were substantiated, 1,844 were unsubstantiated and 628 were still pending as of June 30, 2015;
- APS investigators completed almost 1,900 investigations;
- As of June 2015, 593 DPPC 19C APS investigations were overdue;

- APS investigators conducted 30 death investigations; 10 reports were unsubstantiated, 2 (two) reports were substantiated and 18 reports are pending.
- APS investigators from DPPC conducted 17 investigations involving the Department of Corrections (DOC);
- APS investigators from DPPC conducted 5 (five) retaliation investigations;
- APS investigators from DPPC, DDS, DMH and MRC attended the Statewide

Inter-agency APS training on conducting Trauma Informed Investigations on October 22, 2014 at UMass Medical School, Worcester, MA. Speakers included Shirley Paceley, Director, Blue Tower Training; Janice Mirabassi, Director, Department of Public Health (DPH) Rape Crisis Center Program, and Victim Rights Law Center. The conference was sponsored by DDS Commissioner Elin M. Howe and Building Partnerships Initiative.

## DPPC Oversight Unit



*DPPC Oversight Unit  
from left:  
Ann Murray (Manager),  
Ada Diaz,  
Kerry Joyce,  
Lisa Bukow,  
Drew Zamagni,  
Kathy Bodrero,  
Kenneath Okoro and  
Heidi Cresta (Manager).*

The DPPC Oversight Unit oversaw approximately 3,500 cases during FY2015. These cases are monitored according to the statute and regulations. The type of monitoring/oversight necessary for each of the cases is dependent on the nature of the case, and is determined on a case-by-case basis. The Oversight Unit also works in collaboration with the State Police Detective Unit (SPDU) assigned to the DPPC.

The overall goal of the Oversight Unit is to ensure that individuals who are identified as victims or are at risk of abuse or neglect are protected. The oversight officer is available to the investigator, service providers and law enforcement as a resource, supplementing their work and providing another perspective. An oversight officer may at times accompany an investigator on site visits or interviews during the course of an investigation.

The DPPC Oversight Unit is primarily responsible for the following:

- Assessing risk to victims throughout the investigative process;
- Backing up DPPC's Hotline staff by answering the 24-hour abuse Hotline, collecting and evaluating information from reporters and making decisions regarding the actions necessary;
- Maintaining an extensive database of reports of abuse and deaths;
- Reviewing completed APS 19C investigation reports for compliance with DPPC's governing statute and regulations;

- Evaluating recommendations and protective service actions made during and as a result of an investigation; and
- Ensuring that appropriate and adequate protective service measures are put in place.

### **Oversight Unit FY2015 Update**

During Fiscal Year 2015, DPPC Oversight Officers:

- Were assigned a total of 2,772 new cases to monitor;
- Reviewed 1,893 investigation reports;
- Reviewed 1,558 protective service plans;
- Closed 2,745 cases;
- Facilitated and monitored the appointment of guardians on four protective service cases; and
- Have 1,044 active cases, as of June 2015.

### **DPPC Outreach and Prevention**

DPPC defines prevention as: ***“Any action taken to prevent abuse or neglect from occurring ...or, any action taken to protect the individual from risk of further abuse, once it has already occurred.”*** DPPC is committed to addressing the problem of abuse and neglect as it relates to persons with disabilities. To accomplish this, DPPC created an Abuse Prevention Unit and included abuse prevention as part of the agency mission. DPPC uses education and awareness as primary tools in its efforts to stop abuse. However, abuse prevention encompasses a wide range of activities.



*From left: Jennifer Edwards-Hawkins (Program Coordinator) and Susan Love (Abuse Prevention and Outreach Coordinator)*

Some of DPPC’s ongoing prevention activities include:

- Curricula development and trainings designed to educate law enforcement, mandated reporters, caregivers, persons with disabilities and other professionals regarding the identification and reporting of abuse committed against persons with disabilities;
- Providing consultation or information to other agencies interested in the development of abuse prevention programs;
- Collaboration with other agencies to develop presentations, programs and services related to abuse prevention and improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities;
- Development and distribution of educational materials to introduce DPPC operations, the role of mandated reporters, and indicators of abuse and neglect;
- Collecting and analyzing data from DPPC’s database, which tracks over 800 pieces of information on each report to the 24-Hour Hotline. Data is provided to service providing agencies, upon request, to assist them in identifying and correcting trends in their programs that may lead to abuse and neglect; and
- Participation in local, statewide and national conferences to increase knowledge and share information related to the protection of persons with disabilities.

## Outreach and Prevention FY2015 Update

The following trainings took place to educate persons with disabilities, mandated reporters and others on recognizing, reporting and responding to abuse and crimes committed against persons with disabilities:

- Fifty-three *Awareness and Action* trainings were conducted, resulting in 858 individuals being trained.
- Seven one-day trainings were held for new recruits within the police academy resulting in 345 recruits being trained.
- Seven other law enforcement trainings were conducted, resulting in 370 officers being trained.
- An all-day Tier I training, sponsored by Building Partnerships Initiative in collaboration Hampden County District Attorney Anthony D. Gulluni, was held for law enforcement, prosecutors, adult protective service investigators, victim witness advocates and medical personnel in Holyoke, MA, with 125 in attendance.
- Five trainings were held to educate 153 medical personnel.
- Two Protect, Report, Preserve trainings, sponsored by Building Partnerships Initiative, were held at the Worcester Recovery Center and Hospital, Worcester, on April 2, 2015 and Florian Hall, Dorchester on April 30, 2015 with 288 attendees.
- An all day APS investigators inter-agency training on Trauma Informed Investigations, sponsored by Building Partnerships Initiative, was held on October 22, 2014 at UMass Medical School, Worcester, MA.
- Sixteen local trainings were conducted to educate 1,018 human service providers.
- An additional 17 trainings were held at different venues, with 766 staff from various agencies being trained.
- DPPC participated in and provided outreach materials at ten conferences and one legislative event with 3,877 in attendance.
- Five presentations were conducted for other states with 375 people trained. These included NAPSA Conference, Portland, OR; Texas APS Conference, San Antonio, TX; South Carolina APS Conference, Myrtle Beach, SC; and NAPSA National APS Strategic Planning Meeting, Austin, TX.
- Twenty five agencies/organizations from thirteen states and two countries contacted DPPC for assistance with research projects, outreach materials and training curricula.

## IT Unit



*Rick Robbins*  
(IT Coordinator)

Considering the small number of staff and large responsibility the DPPC has, it would be impossible to accomplish all the things that are achieved without the contributions of DPPC's Information Technology Unit. The DPPC relies heavily on technology and consequently the DPPC IT Unit is a vital part of every activity. Every DPPC unit depends on the IT Unit to develop, modify and make available the most current and innovative technology; and by doing this the DPPC IT Unit helps to make the agency as efficient and effective as possible.



The DPPC Abuse Database is a one-of-a-kind information management system developed at DPPC and primarily used to organize, store and report information about every abuse report, investigation, protective service action and oversight activity accomplished by DPPC staff. However, since its inception, the database has evolved into an invaluable source of information not only about individual situations, but also about statewide trends regarding abuse of adults with disabilities. State agencies, media outlets, service providers and a host of others, request and receive information from the DPPC database throughout the year. This information is utilized for service planning, court proceedings and news articles to name just some of the uses.

## **Document Retention Unit**

The DPPC Document Retention Unit is responsible for maintaining the integrity and security of all documents created by and in the possession of the DPPC. Most of these documents are stored in one of the two DPPC databases. The Document Retention Unit is an essential piece in DPPC's successful efforts to ensure the protection of personally identifying information as required by Executive Order 504 issued by Governor Patrick in September of 2008.



*Document Retention Unit from the left: Michelle Kahler, Paula Owens, Patty Collings and Emil DeRiggi (Deputy Executive Director)*

The Document Retention Unit, in conjunction with the DPPC Legal Unit, is responsible for preparing and processing the documents needed to respond to the hundreds of requests for documents and information made to the DPPC each year. The Document Retention Unit also processes the documents necessary to comply with DPPC's statutory obligation to notify all persons who have been determined to have committed abuse against a person with a disability at the completion of an investigation. There are hundreds of these substantiated investigations each year for which this type of notification must be made. Another activity of the Document Retention Unit is to work with the DPPC Legal Unit to track, process and record the documents related to the hundreds of Petitions for Review that are filed each year with the DPPC.

Although most of the work of the DPPC Document Retention Unit is done behind the scenes, without the dedication, organization and commitment of the staff of this unit, the DPPC would be unable to comply with the many demands and requirements around the security of documents and information in its possession.

## **Document Retention Unit FY2015 Update**

During Fiscal Year 2015, the Document Retention Unit:

- Processed 104 Petitions;
- Completed 428 Record Requests;
- Made 10 Referrals; and
- Notified 371 abusers of the outcome of the investigation finding and their right to petition.

## DPPC Legal Unit

The DPPC Legal Unit provides legal advice and guidance on a variety of matters pertaining to the core functions of DPPC. This includes providing general advice and support to staff investigators from DPPC, Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Mental Health (DMH) and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) who conduct investigations on behalf of DPPC.



*Legal Unit from the left: Andrew Levrault, Assistant General Counsel; Julie Howley Westwater, General Counsel; Mariah Freark, Assistant General Counsel*

Specifically, DPPC Legal Counsel provide:

- Information and assistance to other state agencies regarding protective services and guardianship; and
- Advice, support and training with regard to investigation issues and legal interpretation of the terms and mandates contained in M.G.L. c. 19C and 118 CMR.

DPPC attorneys work in coordination with legal counsel from DDS, DMH, MRC and other agencies, including District Attorneys' offices (DA), the Office of the Attorney General (AG), Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA), Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Public Health (DPH), Division of Professional Licensure (DPL), Department of Corrections (DOC), Medical Examiner's Office (ME) and others. When requested, DPPC legal staff provide information and assistance to other agencies as justice requires.

The DPPC Legal Unit also provides information to the public about DPPC's functions and mandate and handles record requests and court interventions when necessary. In addition, the Legal Unit performs the following specific functions within DPPC:

- Obtains judicial protective orders when an alleged victim of abuse is at immediate risk of harm and is not able to consent to the provision of protective services due to a mental or physical impairment;
- Secures access warrants when law enforcement and/or DPPC APS investigators are unreasonably denied access to an alleged victim of abuse;
- Responds to reports of mandated reporters' failure to report abuse as required by M.G.L. c. 19C and other reporting issues;
- Conducts legal reviews of the findings and conclusions of DPPC Investigation Reports pursuant to 118 CMR 14.00;
- Acts as the DPPC's Keeper of Records and ensures that DPPC responses to written requests for DPPC records are compliant with all statutory requirements;
- Responds to formal legal demands for statutorily protected records, pursuant to court process or court order; and
- Assists Executive Director in advancing and advocating for legislation implicating or affecting DPPC's ability to efficiently perform its core functions.

## DPPC LEGAL UNIT UPDATE 2015

- Completed 125 petitions, with 263 petitions pending review;
  - Completed 428 records requests;
  - Completed 10 referrals; and
  - Notified 371 abusers of the outcome of the investigation finding and their right to petition.
- 

## DPPC State Police Detective Unit



*SPDU from left:  
Sergeant Timothy Grant and Trooper Scott Flaherty*

The State Police Detective Unit (SPDU) assigned to the DPPC is comprised of a Sergeant and four troopers and became fully operational on May 1, 1998. The SPDU provides a statewide mechanism to ensure an effective and rapid response to potential criminal complaints of abuse and neglect against persons with disabilities by coordinating the efforts of adult protective services (APS), human services, state and local law enforcement and the Commonwealth's District Attorneys' Offices.

The SPDU assigned to DPPC reviews 100% of all abuse reports to DPPC's 24-Hour Hotline to determine which ones constitute criminal activity. Reports identified as criminal are referred to the applicable District Attorney's office. As defined in each Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) established in each of the eleven district attorney jurisdictions, the SPDU assigned to DPPC, the state police liaisons within each of the eleven District Attorneys' Offices and the municipal police are assigned to investigate crimes against persons with disabilities as determined by the District Attorney.

The SPDU at DPPC tracks the criminal investigation from intake to indictment on a statewide basis and analyzes the types of crimes involved in the abuse reports received by the DPPC Hotline.

The information tracked includes, but is not limited to, the type of criminal activity, location of criminal activity, investigating officer and criminal charges brought.

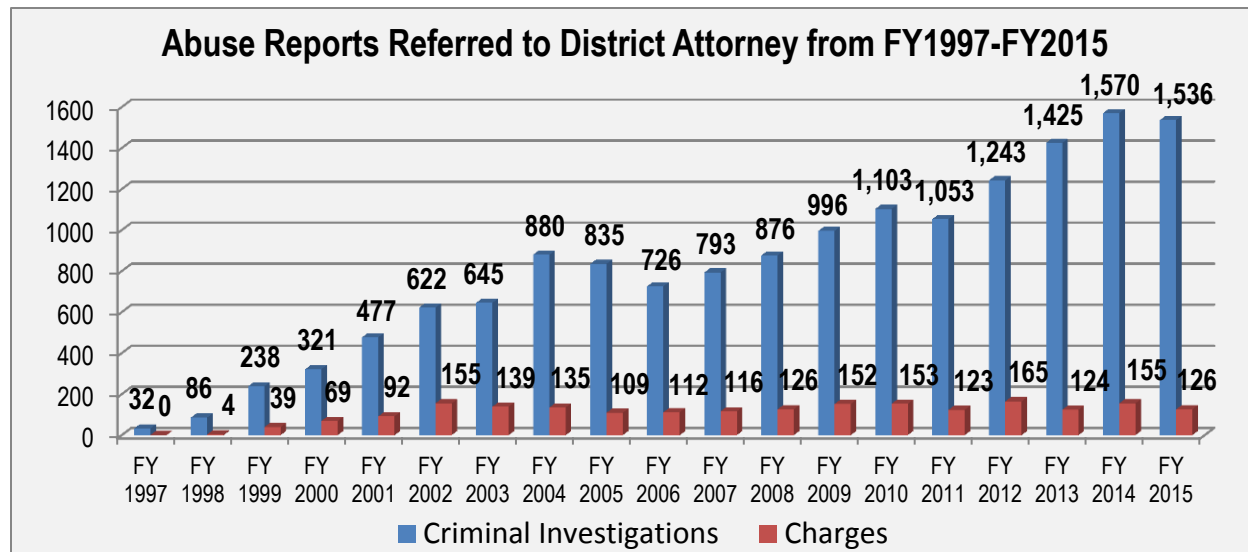
Within Fiscal Year 2015, the SPDU reviewed 9,449 allegations of abuse. Of the 9,449 reports reviewed, 1,536 were referred to the District Attorneys for assignment of the criminal investigation.

### SPDU / DPPC Welcomes Two Troopers...

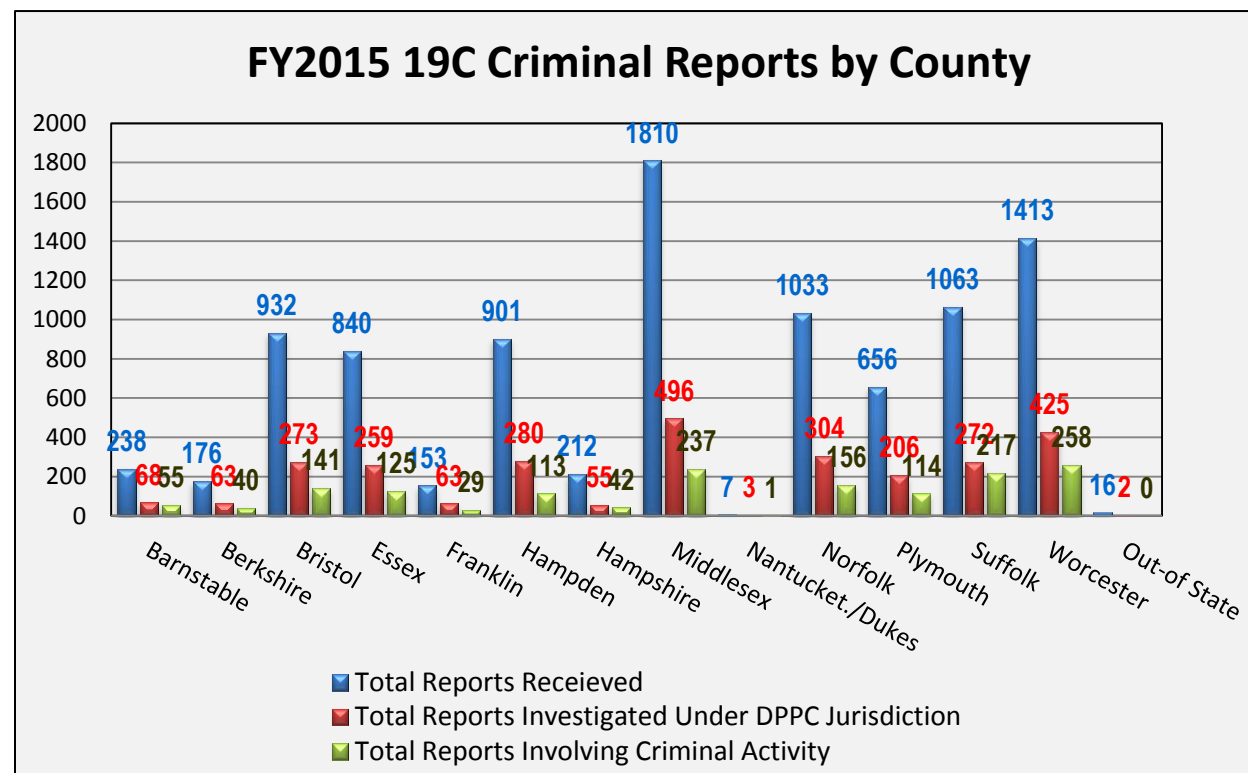
**Trooper Jodi Gerardi** joins the SPDU/DPPC with a wealth of investigative experience. Prior to joining the State Police, Trooper Gerardi was a North Reading Police Officer for ten years, and worked as a Detective for many of those years. Trooper Gerardi brought that experience, as well as a phenomenal work ethic, to the unit. It is a pleasure to have her join the SPDU/DPPC.

**Trooper David Coker** comes to the SPDU/DPPC as an experienced State Police Detective, who worked for five years in the Bristol County District Attorney's Office investigating homicides. Prior to joining the State Police, Trooper Coker worked for the Department of Corrections, and also brings that experience to the unit. Trooper Coker is a welcome addition to the SPDU/DPPC Team.

The following graph shows the number of reports referred to the District Attorney for criminal investigation and the number of criminal charges from fiscal year 1997 to 2015. In 1997 there were 32 reports referred with zero charges and in 2015 there were 1,536 abuse reports referred with 126 charges. Please note the criminal charges is a fluid number. As additional charges are taken, the number will rise to reflect the charges.

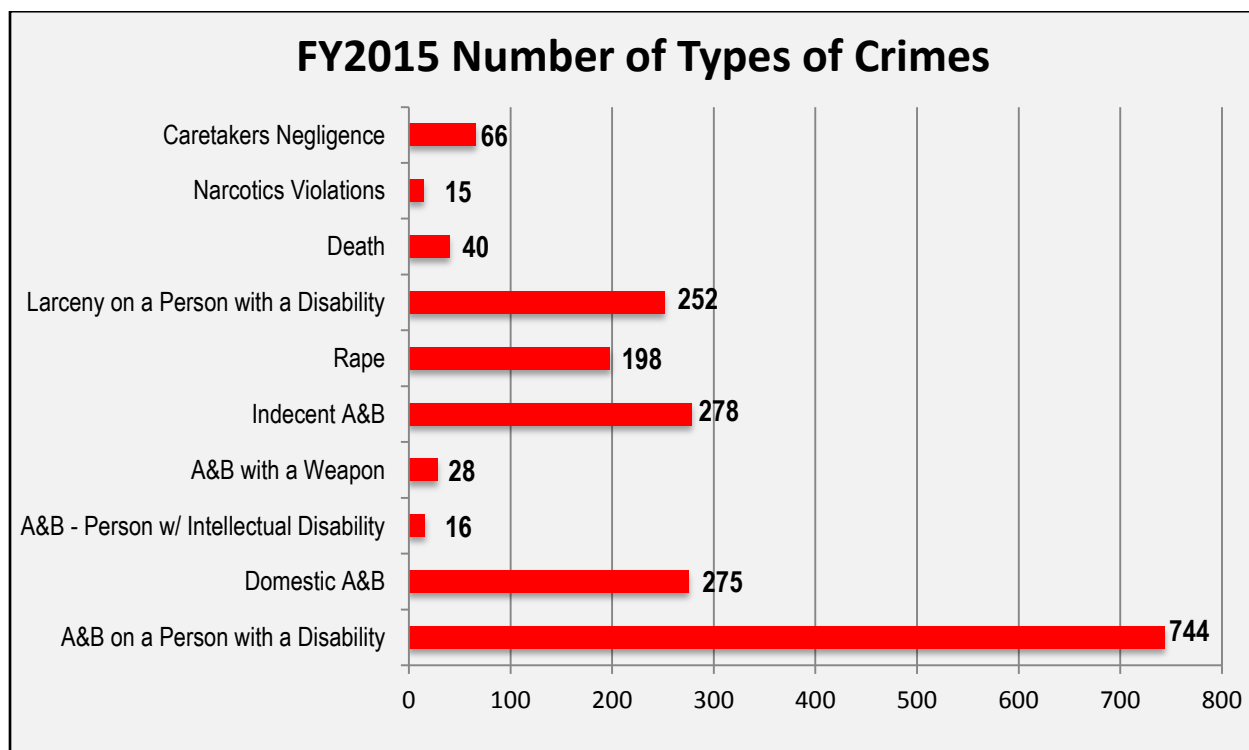


The graph below is a breakdown by county of the number of reports received by the DPPC Hotline, reports meeting the jurisdiction for 19C investigation and number of reports referred to the District Attorney for criminal investigation.





The SPDU assigned to DPPC tracks the types of crimes involved in the abuse reports received by the DPPC Hotline. The following graph presents the types of criminal activity reported during Fiscal Year 2015.



The SPDU tracks incidents of domestic violence involving persons with disabilities. Domestic violence is abuse that often takes place where the person lives. Domestic violence can be any type of abuse including sexual assault and rape, emotional, psychological or financial. Domestic violence involves family and household members who are or were married, living together, related by blood, parents of a common child or involved in a substantive dating relationship.

During Fiscal Year 2015, it was determined that 283 reports made to the DPPC Hotline involved domestic violence abuse. These reports require the State Police Detective Unit to notify law enforcement immediately to ensure the safety of the individuals

involved and assist in the issuance of restraining orders and criminal prosecution of offenders if warranted.

As well as actively investigating criminal complaints committed against persons with disabilities, the SPDU continues to be involved in training agency staff, law enforcement and other professionals. Training is provided on recognizing and reporting abuse and on what to do and what not to do when abuse or a crime committed against a person with a disability is suspected. Training of recruits and seasoned officers throughout the Commonwealth continues to be provided at the request of the Municipal Police Training Committee and the State Police Academy.

## **2015 Pride in Performance Award Recipient Audrey Drinan**

### **Audrey Drinan, Personnel Coordinator**



The 2015 Performance Recognition Program (PRP) award recipient, Audrey Drinan, was recognized by DPPC staff for her initiative, thoughtfulness and persistence. As

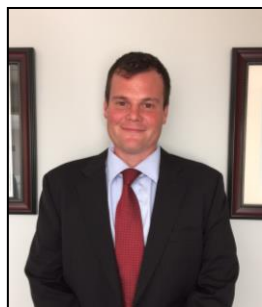
Personnel Coordinator, Audrey is responsible for responding to all human resource matters, maintaining office machines, completing DPPC's Diversity and Affirmative Action Plan, ordering, receiving, and maintaining office supplies, recording time and attendance, responding to public inquiries, maintaining personnel files, and so much more. Audrey performs these duties seamlessly. In addition, each year Audrey oversees and coordinates an annual review all of DPPC's inventory of office assets ensuring possessions are properly recorded and labeled and simultaneously identifying inventory that is obsolete. Within the year and during an

agency-wide telephone system conversion, Audrey took a leadership role and organized the return of the outdated telephones and related equipment. Audrey also efficiently tracked, tagged and recorded all of the equipment received for the new telephone system. This undertaking was tedious, required significant attention to detail and good organizational skills with Audrey possessing all the necessary talent.

In addition to being recognized internally, Audrey was recognized and awarded for exceeding benchmark spending for utilizing Women and Minority-Owned Business Enterprise (W/MBE) vendors by the Operational Services Division (OSD). Audrey wears many hats at DPPC. Her attention to detail and professionalism are great resources for the Administration & Finance Unit and DPPC. The entire DPPC team applauds Audrey for her many efforts and accomplishments!

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### **DPPC Welcomes Andrew Levrault Assistant General Counsel:**



Attorney Levrault joins DPPC having worked as Labor Counsel for the Commonwealth's Division where he represented a variety of human service agencies in labor

arbitrations and before various administrative judicial bodies including the Civil Service Commission, Commission Against Discrimination, and Department of Labor Relations. In this position, Attorney

Levrault worked closely with investigators, reviewing investigations and advising on the proper application of the law and regulations. Attorney Levrault also worked in the Office of the Attorney General's Trial Division where he participated in all aspects of civil litigation. Andrew's strong background in administrative and civil law coupled with superior academic credentials will make him an effective member of the DPPC's legal division.

## **DPPC Welcomes Mariah Freark Assistant General Counsel:**



Attorney Freark joins DPPC having worked as the sole Attorney Investigator for the City of Cambridge Human Rights Commission where she independently

conducted all phases of the complaint investigation process. In this position, Attorney Freark became adept at developing and cultivating good working relationships with a diverse group of agencies and people. In addition to her investigatory experience, Attorney Freark's legal experience has required her to understand and apply laws and regulations, and explain those laws and regulations to various audiences in an accessible way. Mariah's commitment to public service and strong written and oral communication skills will make her an asset to the DPPC's legal division.

## **DPPC Welcomes John Hubbard APS Investigator:**



DPPC is pleased to announce that John Hubbard started working for the DPPC on February 2, 2015 as the newest member of the Investigations Unit. John comes to DPPC from the

Office of the Attorney General where he worked as a Financial Investigator in the

Criminal Bureau. John is also a veteran of the Air Force and served a tour of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. John holds a Masters of Education Degree from Boston College as well as a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social and Criminal Justice and History. The skills and experience John brought to this agency has made him a valuable asset.

## **DPPC Welcomes Mayra Kearns Hotline Operator:**



Mayra was hired in October 2014 as a Hotline Operator for DPPC's Abuse Reporting Hotline. Mayra came to the DPPC with a wealth of

experience working in the protective service field. She attended the University of Miami, obtained her Master's degree at Suffolk University and is a licensed social worker.

Mayra has worked for both the Department of Children and Families as a case manager/social worker and also worked for the Department of Public Health, providing services to homeless families. In her short tenure at the DPPC, Mayra has made a significant impact on the day to day operations of the Intake Unit at the DPPC. She also speaks Spanish, which is a tremendous asset in assisting our bilingual callers. DPPC is lucky to have her as part of our team!

DPPC will greatly benefit from the knowledge and expertise these new employees bring to their positions.

# DPPC COMMISSIONERS

## IN CLOSING

The Commissioners of the Disabled Persons Protection Commission would like to take this opportunity to thank Governor Charles D. Baker and the House and Senate members for their ongoing commitment and support in protecting adults with disabilities within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts against abuse and neglect. We would also like to recognize and thank the many hard-working men and women who dedicate their work to enhancing the quality of life of people with disabilities. Your dedication is immensely appreciated.



*Yndia Lorick-Wilmot, Ph.D.*

Yndia Lorick-Wilmot, Ph.D.  
**Commissioner**

*Maurice L Medoff*

Maurice Medoff  
**Commissioner**

*Gail P. Varrasso*

Gail Varrasso  
**Chairperson**

*The DPPC staff thanks you for taking the time to review DPPC's FY2015 Annual Report. If you have questions or require additional information, please contact the DPPC at (617) 727-6465.*

Charles D. Baker  
**GOVERNOR**

Karyn E. Polito  
**LT. GOVERNOR**

Nancy A. Alterio  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
**Disabled Persons Protection Commission**  
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**WEBSITE: <http://www.mass.gov/dppc>**

Gail Varrasso  
**CHAIRPERSON**

Yndia Lorick-Wilmot, Ph.D.  
**COMMISSIONER**

Maurice Medoff  
**COMMISSIONER**